

Message Text

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ACTION VO-03

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----- 069792

R 011022Z OCT 75

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5038

INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

USMISSION GENEVA

AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

AMEMBASSY ROME

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 13970

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: CVIS, UR, SREF

SUBJECT: ARMENIAN REFUGEES

RERS: A. MOSCOW A-341 B. MOSCOW 8584 C. STATE 17907 #

1. SUMMARY. LARGE NUMBERS OF SOVIET ARMENIANS CONTINUE TO RESETTLE IN US UNDER IMMIGRANT VISA AND TCP PROGRAMS. HOWEVER, THE PROBLEMS OF SOVIET ARMENIANS HAVING EXIT PERMISSION FOR LEBANON BUT ACTUALLY DESIRING ENTER US HAVE ESCALATED BECAUSE OF LEBANESE REFUSAL TO ISSUE REQUIRED VISAS. LEBANESE CONSUL INFORMED CONSOFF DURING RECENT DISCUSSION THAT GOL HAS DECIDED NOT TO ISSUE VISAS TO SOVIET ARMENIANS FOR INDEFINITE PERIOD. DEPARTMENT AND EMBASSY BEIRUT MAY WISH TO CONSIDER REQUESTING GOL TO REVISE VISA POLICY IN ORDER TO HEAD OFF INCREASING HUMANITARIAN AND PUBLIC RELATIONS PROBLEMS. END SUMMARY

2. DURING THE FIRST SIX MONTHS OF 1975, EMBASSY SENT TOTAL OF 133 SOVIET ARMENIAN EMIGRANTS FOR TCP AT ROME AND ISSUED 36 IVS TO ARMENIAN IMMIGRANTS TO US, FOR TOTAL OF 169 SOVIET ARMENIANS DESTINED TO US (REFTEL A). ETHNIC ARMENIANS ACCOUNTED
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FOR 32 PERCENT OF THE IVS ISSUED AND 27 PERCENT OF TCP CASES

PROCESSED BY EMBASSY DURING JANUARY - JUNE 1975. SITUATION OF SOVIET ARMENIANS HAVING EXIT PERMISSION FOR LEBANON HAS DETERIORATED DRASTICALLY, HOWEVER, BECAUSE THE LEBANESE EMBASSY IN MOSCOW IS CURRENTLY REFUSING TO ISSUE ANY VISAS TO SOVIETS OF ARMENIAN ETHNIC BACKGROUND. MEANWHILE, ARMENIANS HAVING EXIT PERMISSION FOR LEBANON ARRIVE DAILY AT EMBASSY SEEKING TO ENTER US, ONLY TO BE TOLD THAT THEY MUST APPLY AT ROME BUT THAT THE EMBASSY CANNOT ASSIST THEM TO DEPART FROM THE USSR.

3. PER INSTRUCTIONS CONTAINED REFTEL C, EMBASSY HAS CONSISTENTLY INFORMED SUCH PROSPECTIVE EMIGRANTS THAT INS ROME MAY ACCEPT THEIR APPLICATIONS FOR CONDITIONAL ENTRY BUT THAT EMBASSY MOSCOW CANNOT PROCESS THEM FOR ENTRY US. THE LEBANESE POLICY OF REFUSING VISAS TO ALL ARMENIANS, THUS VIRTUALLY RULES OUT ANY PROSPECTS FOR THEIR ENTRY INTO US OR INDEED OF THEIR DEPARTURE EVER FROM USSR.

4. CONSOFF PAID CALL ON LEBANESE EMBASSY SEPT 25 TO SEEK CLARIFICATION OF THE CURRENT LEBANESE VISA POLICY AND REQUEST THAT EMBASSY TO RECONSIDER CASES OF ARMENIANS WITH EXIT PERMISSION FOR LEBANON BUT WHO ACTUALLY DESIRE ENTRY US. UPON ARRIVAL LEBANESE EMBASSY, CONSOFF WAS MET BY SOVIET EMPLOYEE WHO DENIED CONSOFF ENTRY UNTIL LEBANESE CONSUL ARRIVED TO KEEP APPOINTMENT. SINCE SEVERAL SOVIET CITIZENS WERE TURNED AWAY BY THE DOORMAN DURING THE COURSE OF THE VISIT, IT WAS EVIDENT THAT MANY PROSPECTIVE EMIGRANTS ARE NOT EVEN ALLOWED ACCESS TO THE EMBASSY. DURING COURSE OF MEETING, LEBANESE CONSULAR OFFICER INFORMED CONSOFF THAT HE HAS INSTRUCTIONS TO REFUSE VISAS TO ALL SOVIETS OF ARMENIAN ETHNIC ORIGIN. HE MAINTAINED THAT LEBANESE GOVERNMENT BELIEVES ITS PREVIOUS LIBERAL IMMIGRATION POLICIES WITH REGARD TO ARMENIANS WAS A MISTAKE. HE STATED THAT 67,000 ARMENIANS HAD BEEN ADMITTED TO LEBANON IN THE PAST FEW YEARS, THAT THEY HAD PROVEN A DISRUPTIVE INFLUENCE IN LEBANESE SOCIETY, AND THAT THEY "HAD THEIR HAND IN" THE RECENT DISTURBANCES IN LEBANON.

5. CONSOFF NOTED THAT ARMENIANS MAKING DAILY INQUIRIES AT US EMBASSY INSIST THEY WANT LEBANESE VISAS ONLY TO SATISFY

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SOVIET EXIT REQUIREMENTS AND THAT THEIR TRUE DESTINATION IS US. LEBANESE CONSUL REPLIED THAT HE HAD NO WAY OF VERIFYING THESE INTENTIONS AND THAT SOVIET ARMENIANS CLAIMING TO DESIRE ENTRY US THROUGH INS ROME MIGHT ACTUALLY PROCEED TO BEIRUT AND REMAIN IN LEBANON. CONSOFF SHOWED LEBANESE CONSUL SOVIET FOREIGN TRAVEL PASSPORT OF A SOVIET ARMENIAN TO WHOM A US IMMIGRANT VISA HAD BEEN ISSUED AND ASKED WHETHER ISSUANCE OF A US IMMIGRANT VISA CONSTITUTED SUFFICIENT EVIDENCE THAT

THE INDIVIDUAL DID NOT INTEND ENTER LEBANON. LEBANESE CONSUL REPLIED THAT EXCEPTIONS COULD NOT BE PERMITTED BECAUSE THE ARMENIANS WHO HAD NOT RECEIVED US IMMIGRANT VISAS WOULD IMMEDIATELY COMPLAIN THAT LEBANON WAS DISCRIMINATING AGAINST THEM. LEBANESE CONSUL CONCLUDED INTERVIEW WITH THE STATEMENT THAT ALTHOUGH CURRENT POLICY IS OFFICIALLY "ONLY TEMPORARY," HE DID NOT EXPECT IT TO CHANGE IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE.

6. THE PROBLEMS OF SOVIET ARMENIANS WHO DESIRE ENTRY US BUT WHO ARE UNABLE TO OBTAIN LEBANESE VISAS REQUIRED FOR EXIT FROM USSR APPEAR TO BE MORE SERIOUS THAN THOSE PREVIOUSLY OUTLINED REFTEL B. IN THE FIRST PLACE, THE NUMBER OF SUCH PERSONS IS MUCH LARGER THAN THE COMPARATIVELY SMALL NUMBER OF PERSONS DENIED VISAS BY OTHER COUNTRIES, SUCH AS FRANCE. SECONDLY, THE SOVIET ARMENIANS WHO ARE CURRENTLY UNABLE TO DEPART USSR ARE USUALLY SUPPORTED BY NUMEROUS US RELATIVES WITH THE COROLLARY PUBLIC RELATIONS PROBLEMS IN THE US. FINALLY, THE EXTENDED DURATION OF THE LEBANESE POLICY WHICH SEEMS IN PROSPECT APPEARS TO BE RESULTING IN A SIGNIFICANT HUMANITARIAN PROBLEM.

7. ACTION REQUESTED: DEPARTMENT AND EMBASSY BEIRUT MAY WISH TO CONSIDER REQUESTING LEBANESE GOVERNMENT TO MODIFY ITS VISA POLICY TOWARD ARMENIANS DESIRING TO ENTER US. PROPOSAL MIGHT BE TO ISSUE EITHER A TRANSIT VISA OF VERY SHORT DURATION OR A PRO-FORMA STAMP SUCH AS THAT EMBASSY MOSCOW PLACES IN PASSPORTS OF PERSONS PROCESSED UNDER TCP PROGRAM. IN ABSENCE OF SOLUTION, PRESSURE ON EMBASSY AND DEPARTMENT FROM US SPONSORS OF SOVIET ARMENIANS UNABLE TO ENTER US IS LIKELY TO INCREASE.
STOESSEL

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